

Episode One: Back To Reality by TheIncredibleD8

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Adventure, Romance

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-11-18 00:22:01

Updated: 2016-11-23 22:09:18

Packaged: 2019-12-17 14:47:16

Rating: T

Chapters: 5

Words: 16,971

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: One month after the events of Stranger Things, Eleven finds her way back to reality and stuck in a harrowing predicament. Meanwhile, Will finds himself suffering with a bizarre case of PTSD, and Mike continues to struggle to move past Eleven's disappearance. What happens when Eleven reveals a secret about the Upside-Down that changes everything? (Episode One Of Series)

1. Back To Reality

Hello everyone! I first watched the Stranger Things series about a month ago, and I really enjoyed it! I think it definitely (as the seasons go by) has the potential to end up as one of my top shows of all time! I love the characters, the plot, the 80's feel... it's all very well done. I'm going to be writing a series of little "episodes" taking place directly after the original series, so I hope everyone enjoys it! I'm certainly looking forward to it!

Without further ado, please enjoy the first chapters of my new series, *The Others!*

Truthfully, it had never been quiet for the town of Hawkins since the bizarre incident just a few weeks back. Christmas was approaching, but still, even with the upcoming holiday, the city as well as all surrounding cities could not stop buzzing about the mystery. Upon the discovery of brain-crushed corpses in the middle school, the chatter had been nonstop; but it's easy to see why. For such a quiet town, it was the biggest news story and the biggest garner of national attention in it's entire lifespan.

The date, December 15th, was a sweet sound to Mike's ears, however. With the combined weight of school and the crushing disappearance of Eleven, he had began to feel a bit lost. As if the discovery of another dimension wasn't enough, *now* he had to deal with the knowledge that El may be stuck there; cold, miserable, alone. It bothered him greatly; no, even more than that. It *killed* him to know that someone as sweet and innocent as her had to be taken away from the world. But December 15th marked the beginning of Christmas break, which Mike accepted with cordial hands.

This specific day; a Saturday, he slept in. During weekends as of late, he has formed a habit of doing so. His parents associated it with depression, which he couldn't really deny. The events of November had chipped away at his psyche to the point that falling asleep and dreaming were the highlights of his life.

Mike sat up in his bed, rubbing his eye drowsily. A quick glance at the clock revealed the time: 12:06 PM.

He jumped out of his bed, remembering his mother's request for him not to sleep past eleven o' clock, quickly changing clothes to make it appear as though he's been up for a while. He picked up his walkie talkie, lifting it to his ear quickly.

"Lucas" he spoke into the microphone, "Lucas? Do you copy?"

There was a touch of static before he released his finger from the button, and then a brief moment of silence before Lucas promptly responded.

"Yeah" Lucas bluntly replied.

"You're supposed to say "over" when you're done talking" Mike retorted, "remember? Over."

"Whatever. Somethin' wrong? Over".

Mike pressed the button to reply once more.

"No, nothing's wrong. We still up for the arcade at two? Over".

"Yeah. Dustin and Will up for it too? Over".

Mike continued pressing the walkie talkie against his ear as he exited his room, a thoughtful look on his face as he opened the door, slowly closing it behind him.

"They're meeting us there at two. Over".

"Sounds good. See ya' there. Over".

Mike remembered he had the walkie talkie and cracked his door once again, tossing it on to his bed before turning to head downstairs. He began walking, but stopped at the mirror outside of his bedroom, remembering that this was the exact mirror Eleven once looked into. He remembered the exact context too: they had dressed Eleven up in traditionally feminine clothing in order to disguise her, which proved to be efficient. He smiled as he recalled Eleven causing Troy to wet his pants; a memory that will forever remain amusing to him. However, subsequently, his mind wandered back to the disappearance of El, turning his smile upside down instantaneously.

Stop it, Mike he scolded himself as he looked away from the mirror, *it's like mom says; I need to think about other things. You can't change the past...*

He sighed before proceeding down the stairs, running his hand down the railing.

Snow was one of Mike's many fascinations. Something about the chilly air combined with hot chocolate, the adrenaline of sledding, the madness of snowball fight and the feeling of the snow crunching beneath his boots; it was just all too magical. So, naturally, everyday he'd come downstairs, he'd wish upon a star to see snow masking his front lawn; even during summer days. Now, in December, it was something he *constantly* expected to happen.

Upon reaching the bottom of the stairs, he peered out the front door; the reflection of green on the grass meeting his eye. He looked on in slight disappointment, proceeding to the kitchen to fix himself a bowl of cereal.

Mike wasn't the only one severely affected by the experience; not even close. Will Byers was perhaps took the biggest hit mentally after being trapped in the Upside-Down for a prolonged amount of time. The nightmares were nonstop for him, and even in class, his friends would spot him drawing pictures of disturbing nature; dead bodies, strange worm-like creatures, the face of the demogorgon, as well as a drawing of the four of them being devoured by a dark, shadowy figure.

Although it creeped the three of them out, Will insisted that it was just a form of "psychiatric therapy". Still, the images engraved in his notebook managed to shake them emotionally every time he'd pull them out in class.

He gently poured himself a bowl of cereal, adding a touch of milk as well as adding a spoon to top it off. He set the bowl gently on the table, careful not to spill any of the milk on to their recently cleaned dinner table. As of recently, due to the events of November, Mike had felt continuously isolated from the friends and family around him. He hoped that today would change that, but also warned himself that things can still go wrong. Things could *always* go wrong.

He suddenly heard noise from behind him and turned to face the source, but turned back around in disinterest upon realizing it was simply his teenage sister, Nancy.

"Mike" she spoke to him, which he was hoping she wouldn't do. He now considered it to be a burden to respond to his sister at all; especially in trivial conversation. It just wasn't worth it, as many time, their talks ended in petty arguments.

"What?" he asked, trying his best not to sound too hostile.

She sat down in the chair diagonal to him, looking at him with an unusual expression of concern.

"You aren't alright" she simply stated. "I can tell".

"Why do you care?" Mike retorted, dropping his spoon into his cereal. "I thought that Steve guy bought every single piece of your worry. I mean, you never stop talk-"

"This isn't about Steve" she muttered, cutting him off. "This is about you. Mom obviously isn't concerned, so I mean..."

Mike looked at her with an empty face, trying to decipher if she had concealed intentions.

"She isn't?"

Nancy shrugged briskly, trying her hardest to maintain a proper exchange of words.

"Well, you know what I mean. She's busy with work and all... she just doesn't get that you lost a good friend. Well, maybe she does, but she's not handling it like a mother should. I mean, isn't she supposed to be offering emotional support or whatever? All she ever does is say "it'll be okay". But seriously; I want to make sure that you're okay, because... it's not easy".

Mike glanced at her incredulously, eating his cereal at a rapid pace; noting the slight awkwardness, but respecting her concerns all the same. It just wasn't something he expected to hear from his sister.

"Define okay" he responded, not knowing exactly how to answer.

She sighed quietly, scratching the back of her neck.

"Umm... I mean, are you like... stable? I mean, of course you feel sad, but are you..."

"I don't want to die, if that's what you're asking me".

Nancy recoiled with subtleness, caught off guard by her young brother's blunt answer. However, his answer was quite striking. She had heard of teens, even kids committing suicide during harsh times in the past, and she feared that perhaps Mike would consider such a drastic decision.

"Well, that's good" she impulsively spoke. "It's just that, when I lost Barb... it felt awful. I just wanted to make sure..."

"I know, I know" he said. "I'm glad you actually care... at least a little bit, but I'm fine. It's Will you should be worried about".

She squinted her eyes in confusion, standing up from the table.

"Well, I mean... he *was* stuck in hell..."

"Not hell; the upside down" he corrected her.

"Whatever" she replied, "I've been there. It's hell to me. I saw the thing that tried to... I don't know... suck his soul out, or something. I just hope he can actually recover from being stuck there".

Mike continued eating his cereal, paying close attention to Nancy's words at the same time.

"So, you suddenly care about Will now too?" he questioned with a mouth full of food, beginning to finish his afternoon breakfast.

Nancy began to walk away, assured that her brother is fine for now.

"I'd say I empathize more now... why?" she asked with a cynical grin. "I guess traveling across dimensions can change you".

Mike nodded in affirmation, remembering his sister's words. She hadn't been the same after crossing to the Upside-Down, after all. Just as she had noticed her brother's change in behavior, he had noticed hers. They had both experienced the death or disappearance of a friend; Will, Barb and now Eleven, and were familiar with the devastation of loss.

Perhaps it's true that isolating himself from family wasn't the smartest thing to do, and he knew that now. As Nancy exited the room and headed back upstairs, he noted that bitterness towards the closest people in his life was not longer acceptable. He couldn't continue to live in loneliness and expect to make it out unscathed. After all...

He feared that it was far from over.

Meanwhile...

The Hawkins National Laboratory was a very peculiar place indeed. Little had such a small town gained such a huge amount of attention due to such a crucial slip-up. The lab had made an immeasurable mistake by opening the portal, using Eleven as a tool to do so. Not only did it cause the demise of innocents, but also resulted in the fine line between worlds being broken.

Little did they know, it was broken permanently.

The Upside-Down was also a very peculiar concept in itself, being completely contrary to everyday reality. Coldness, darkness and emptiness were the words most commonly echoed by those who witness it. They assumed that these words were all that described it, and that the Demogorgon was the lone villain to emerge from the laboratory portal.

However, like most of the multiverse, the scientists only knew one percent (or less) of the dimension. There were things beyond what the scientists could ever contain or comprehend, but what they did not know could not bother them. They assumed that the Demogorgon was the lone creature of the empty space, and thought nothing more...

They stationed guards at the entrance to the portal for more than a

month in case anything were to emerge (which nothing did) until they could conjure up some sort of solution. However, since November, they had come up with nothing short of hypothetical thinking. There was seemingly no solution to closing the threatening portal; except one foreign idea. They feared that their only solution may be the young experiment known as Eleven. They hypothesized using her inter-dimensional knowledge to form a solution, as well as utilizing her telepathic abilities. She opened the portal, so was it possible that she could somehow close it?

"You ready to go, Rogers?" Doctor Price, the new lead scientist spoke to his assistant upon receiving the cue to begin their treacherous mission back into the portal. Their reasoning? To attempt to retrieve the mysterious experiment Eleven.

"Ready?!" he answered swiftly, "when the last guy who went in there came out as nothin' but a buncha' blood and mush?"

The determined Price laughed in response.

"Well, sir Rogers" he spoke jokingly to his fellow scientist, "I didn't sign up for inter-dimensional travel, now did I?"

Some would describe Dr. Price as stoic, composed, driven and clever. However, the more casual term for his mannerism would be: "intelligent, but still a douchebag". His amber eyes and long shaggy brown hair created a look, along with his beyond six foot five frame, that said: "I am of importance".

Dr. Rogers, however, was quite the contrary. During his years as a highway patrolman, he was constantly berated for being short and a bit sheepish in nature; although quite stern when needed. He insisted on not taking the great leaps that Price had planned; some of which he feared would cause harm to innocent lives. It reminded him of Dr. Brenner's former inhumane experiments, and the lengths he would go to reach success...

However, Dr. Rogers desired to value life and innocence over success. He despised Price's mentality of: "you gotta do what you gotta do". One could look in his deep blue eyes and underneath his trimmed blonde hair and see the reserved gentleman underneath. Although he

disagreed with the lead scientist, he had to abide by his rulings. If they wished to recover Eleven, who was he to say no? In fact, he wished to prove himself by entering the world itself.

"I did" Rogers responded to Dr. Price. "So long as there ain't any more of those monstrosities lurkin".

Dr. Price chuckled.

"That thing has been gone for a month now. You shouldn't encounter any real problems, but if you do... you have my condolences".

Dr. Rogers rolled his eyes as he glared at the foreign portal once again; feeling an overwhelming anxiety, but attempting to knock it aside. This would be his chance to prove that he belongs among the elite scientists and doctors. It was now or never...

"Well then" Price spoke with authority. "Since you don't seem to be nervous at all... let's get on with it".

Rogers nodded, concealing his uncertainty as he stepped towards the opening, the other scientists looking on stiffly as he shuffled closer and closer. He tightened his mask as snugly as he could, prepared for the assault of noxious air and oppressing cold.

Rogers took one last look backwards, the thought of the lack of a harness or other missing precautions crossing his mind more than once. Price confidently motioned for him to venture forth, which he did reluctantly.

As he pressed through the thick, bizarre consistency, he found himself growing more and more worried with each passing second. With another glance backwards, all that envelops his sight is unsightly slimy walls and condensed light, pressing him to turn back around to face his objective head-on. He was too far now to turn back...

As he found himself staring a new reality head on, he listened to the strange, distant echoes of sounds he couldn't quite decipher. The sounds were audible, but beyond questionable. They somewhat reminded him of far-off screams; too distant to make out one from

the other. It seemed as though they merged together to form one continuous echo of misery, invoking a feeling of discomfort deep in his stomach.

"Weird sounds" he spoke, holding down the button of his communications system. "Sounds like... a scream. It's endless... never seems to stop" he added, continuing to observe his surroundings.

"Sound like a little girl?" Dr. Price asked intently.

"No, no" he responded. "It's not the experiment. I can't for sure say it's not the wind or somethin', but it's pretty spooky..."

"Don't use that word. You're a prestigious scientist. Remember?"

"Whatever, Price".

"Any signs of life?" Price went on to ask, curious about what his fellow scientist is currently witnessing.

He scanned his surroundings as he ventured further and further away from the ominous portal, staring blankly at the dark trees and the gloomy sky.

"No. The opposite, actually... this whole place seems completely void of *any* life..."

He spoke with truth. His surroundings seemed to echo exactly what Dr. Price told him: that no life would exist in this world; aside from the experiment, of course.

"As expected. Find the experiment, would ya'?"

"Be patient" Rogers suggested. "I just got here. It's... it's incredible. But, I have a question".

"Which is?"

"If the experiment *could* be here, couldn't that thing be also?" he asked nervously. "They *both* disappeared, so..."

"We've been over this, Rogers. She killed that thing with her mind,

accordin' to those kids. She just teleported or something. Don't worry about it".

Dr. Rogers silently decided to dismiss his concerns, deeming them as a threat to the mission. He *had* to complete his assignment... it was the only way to prove that he belonged.

"Hello?!" he called into the open air after releasing the button on his communications device, not bothering to consider the possibility of something being nearby aside from him. "Experiment 011! Do you hear my voice?!"

He received no answer aside from the lingering sound of the wind, or what he envisioned as a scream. He turned from left to right, scanning the formations of rocks and trees ahead with wide eyes. Although cautious, he remained open to venturing forth, the fear of a hostile presence no longer nagging at him.

"Don't think there's anything here. Permission to proceed... say... twenty yards?" Rogers asked into the device.

"Permission granted. Move fast" he heard Price's voice tell him in response.

However, the second he took a step, he heard a leaf crush underneath a considerable amount of weight from his right side, and he whirled around to face it, his flashlight beaming in the direction of the rustling.

"Foreign presence detected" he whispered into the radio, fear causing his voice no noticeably shake.

"Do you see it?" Price questioned aggressively.

"N-no" he responded, shining his light at the array of trees from which the noise originated from. "No visibility. Permission to turn back?"

"Yes, if threat is imminent".

Rogers began to back away from the trees and towards the portal about ten yards behind him, the screams of the air beginning to take

a toll on his psyche. Then, he detects movement from behind him, and turns around with a weak gasp, coming face to face with none other than the experiment.

"Y-you!" he coughed, grasping his stomach in attempt to recover. "You damn near scared me to death!"

Eleven looked on blankly, blinking as she stared ahead at him.

"H-how are you still alive? What'd you eat!? Aren't you cold?!" he questioned frantically, backing away from her slowly once again, recalling the gruesome specifics of what she did to Brenner.

Once again, Eleven just stared ahead as if Rogers were speaking a foreign language; which was partially true. Her knowledge of the English language was quite limited.

"You... you need to come with me" he spoke, enunciating each word and pointing to the portal.

Eleven knew what the doctor was trying to get across, and also knew that Brenner was dead. She recognized his uniform, and knew the only way back was the portal in the laboratory. She knew that she had to go with him, but she also knew her abilities were sufficient enough to allow escape if needed.

Eleven slowly nodded, turning to the portal with a half-smile.

"Let's go" she spoke clearly.

To Dr. Roger's shock, Eleven led the way back to the portal. He noted the stains of blood on her sleeve, which hinted that she had been forced to use her abilities on a vigorous measure somewhat recently.

As they came face-to-face with the passage, Rogers turned to the strange child with a curious expression, taking one last glance at the cold, dark world behind them.

"Were you alone?" he slowly asked her before they pressed on.

Eleven looked at him innocently.

"Alone?" she questions, not understanding the word.

"Was it just you in here, or were there... other people... or things?"

Rogers sees her eyes grow a touch wider before she takes an unsteady breath, turning back to the portal.

"Were you?" he pressed on again.

She took one last solemn look at him before quickly turning back to the opening, pressing on through the portal with somewhat of an urgency.

Rogers sighed as he two entered the portal once more, pressing down the button to notify Price of their returning.

"Returning with objective in stable condition" he spoke. "We'll be there in a moment".

2. The Doctor

Hawkins Arcade- 2:12 PM

Mike hopped off his bike as he pulled up alongside the sizable Hawkins Arcade, spotting Lucas, Will and Dustin impatiently waiting at the entrance. He spotted Dustin standing with his hands placed on his hips, looking at him with a half-smile.

"You're twelve minutes late" Dustin informed him as he reached them, to which Mike shrugged nonchalantly.

"I'm not always right with bike ride arrival estimates" he proclaimed. "And it's just twelve minutes. Not a big deal".

"Come on, dude" Lucas groaned, "you even made up the time!"

Mike found himself often irritated with Lucas's stubbornness, but he accepted it long ago. As long as Lucas existed, stubbornness would remain a large presence in the group itself. Mike even hypothesized that Lucas's middle name could *be* "stubborn".

"Come on" Will unexpectedly intervened, being the reasonable one of the group. "We came here to play some games, not argue".

The group considered his words in silence for a moment, nodding in agreement.

"Will's right" Dustin confirmed, "We're here to play some sweet ass arcade games, not fight. Well, except on the new Punch-Out machine..."

"You're kidding!" Mike exclaimed. "They have Punch-Out now!?"

Dustin gave a somewhat excited thumbs up, knowing the group would be hoarded around that lone game machine the entirety of their visit. Although he enjoyed their time together, he really hated the conflicts that were due to come with it.

The group proceeded with excitement; an excitement they retained even through the harsh, dark, confusing time known as November.

When they were together, it somehow made them feel so much stronger; like they could face the concept of an alternate reality with open arms.

They rushed to the brand new "Punch-Out" machine; the only one lacking their usual energy being Will. Now, he was never the most outrageous of the group, but he certainly wasn't the same as they approached the new video game. After being stuck in the Upside-Down, he would never be the same...

He experienced a strange occurrence back in November in which he seemed to vomit a slug into the bathroom sink. It continued scratching away at his patience, although he refused to directly address it. It bothered him too much to look it in the eye.

Will also never bothered to inform his parents of the bizarre event, as he figured his mother had worried far too much already. The possibility of such events occurring again or even worsening had crossed his mind many times already, which only worsened his mental state.

"Mike and Lucas first!" Dustin suggested, which the group accepted as a good opening match.

As the match commenced and eventually went on to be a win for Mike, the figure of a well-known police officer appeared at the entrance to the arcade before wandering inside and stumbling upon a celebrating Mike in front of the arcade machine.

The group then spotted him, turning their attention to him as they held their spare change in their hands.

"Officer Hopper" Dustin exclaimed in shock, "what are you doin' at the arcade?"

Officer Hopper rubbed his chin, looking over the children as if he were trying to tell if they had done any wrong. Ever since the startling events of November, Officer Hopper had been suspicious of anything and everything. Nothing seemed to evade his piercing yet sluggish gaze and powerful skepticism.

"Was stoppin' by to get some pizza next door for the officers back at the station. Saw your bikes outside... you kids aren't up to anything, are you?"

The kids looked around at each other, careful not to say anything to draw more of Hopper's attention.

"Just playing some... games" Mike answered, gesturing to the arcade machine.

Hopper nodded, narrowing his eyes at the arcade machine for no clear reason. One of Hopper's worst, most nagging fears was the possibility that the lab still hasn't gotten rid of the portal. The police station made them promise that the portal would be gone within a week or two, and that they'd find some way to close it. He, of course, still had his suspicions, and feared any possibility of there being another portal...

"Games ruin your brain" Hopper told the children, attempting to sound knowledgeable.

"So does alcohol" Lucas retorted, drawing a dirty look from the chief.

"Watch your mouth" he said, pointing at the child. "Didn't your parents ever teach you respect?"

Lucas shrugged casually.

"It's just a suggestion, Chief".

Hopper purses his lips, moving on in the conversation. He knew the children had firsthand knowledge of this threatening alternate dimension, so he always made sure to keep them on his watch. Perhaps if something happened regarding... well, unknown methods of crime... they'd be first on his list.

"I'll leave ya' to your game, but you kids remember: anything weird happens, you know the number".

"What's the number for 911?" Dustin asked jokingly, elbowing Lucas and Mike in attempt to gain amusement, to no avail.

Officer Hopper glared at him with a serious expression, apparently in no mood for any type of laughter or jokes.

"Oh, come on!" Dustin groaned in his usual toothy voice. "It's a joke! You know... *sarcasm? Satire?*"

The silence continued on as Dustin sighed once more, turning back to the arcade system with an exasperated expression.

"Well, good luck with the pizza" Mike said genuinely although the ending sounded much like a question, to which Hopper tilts his head upwards, signaling something similar to a nod.

"Call us if anything happens" he repeated once more before turning and exiting the arcade. Hopper, although keeping the town at peace was his key job, hated days like those of the past few weeks; boring, slow, uneventful and forgettable. Perhaps this was to make up for the week of extreme eventfulness back in November; although he thought of that week as making up for the months and months of boredom prior to that. So, all in all, he wished for the best of both worlds. Some simple non-inter-dimensional trouble downtown would certainly suffice...

"Sorry Will" Lucas spoke. "I know he helped find you and all, but he's gotta be the weirdest cop I've ever known".

"Lucas" Mike responded. "He's the *only* cop you've ever really known".

Lucas blinked.

"Still, my point rings true. He's weird".

Dustin chuckled in agreement as they watched Hopper walk out of the arcade and back to his police car.

"I wish El was here" Dustin stated. "She was like our one man wrecking crew. Like our bodyguard or something".

"Yeah. We never had to worry about *anyone* hurting us. Not even Troy" Lucas replied, speaking of the classic school bully figure, Troy. Ever since his humiliation at the hands of Eleven as well as his broken arm, he had been a bit quiet at school; evading any sort of

unnecessary attention. He was almost considered a joke of sorts by other pupils, aside from his loyal cronies.

"I miss her too" Mike said, "but I mean, there's no reason to think too much about it. We won't ever see her again" he added with strong hint of disappointment.

Dustin patted him on the back in encouragement.

"Oh, come on! She's basically a superhero! She'll be back sooner than you can say: "Oh, look! Eleven is back!"".

Mike rolled his eyes, turning back to the arcade game, preparing to play Dustin in the second round.

"You are a master of comedy, Dustin" he muttered.

Although Mike wanted to believe he'd see El again, it just seemed impossible for him to set his mind on. After seeing her explode into nothing but mere ashes, the idea of ever feeling her presence again... well, it just vanished itself from his mind.

As the others played the arcade game with all their attention focused, Will lingered a few feet behind them, drawing on his sketch pad that he seemed to carry around everywhere. Among his drawings that most considered "normal", there were more than a few that raised some eyebrows. Human corpses being devoured, skulls being crushed, shadowy figures, beastly creatures with bloody jaws and blunt, harrowing writings of his experiences; many thought to be exaggerated by him, or simply made up.

In one disturbing writing, Will wrote of seeing the death of another child while in the Upside-Down, describing the child's demise as:

Today, I woke up to the sounds of shrieks and the roar of the demogorgon. I kept quiet, but I couldn't help myself from looking out the window of my fort. She was nine, maybe ten. She was scared. More than scared. She was horrified. She was confused. She had no place to run, no place to hide. The Demogorgon was moving faster than she could crawl...

I've seen the Demogorgon's usual method of execution, and this was

nothing like it. It seemed more hungry, more desperate... I can't explain why. I watched as it tore into her, ripped her, in all bluntness, in two. She choked on blood for a while until it put an end to her by ripping into her throat, but that was more than enough to nauseate me. I managed to keep quiet and hide my scent, but it killed me to see such grotesque violence right outside of my home of sorts...

The smell of the girl's blood and the sound of her horrified screams still will not leave.

However, in all likelihood, considering the demogorgon only stalked one town and only two people; Will and the teenage Barb went missing, there's not really any real chance of his graphic story being truthful. When others would ask Will about his story, he'd keep quiet, insisting that talking about it was "useless".

As they occupied the arcade, Will stared down at his current drawing with a concealed intrigue, eyeing the graphite-carven slug-like creature. He recalled the night he happened to vomit one into the bathroom sink, creating a whole new fear for him:

What happens next?

Meanwhile At The Lab...

Eleven sat quietly in the lone metallic chair in the small "makeshift interrogation room of sorts", eyeing the two scientists in front of her; Dr. Price, and Dr. Rogers. They stared back at her, noting nearly each and every one of her actions and words. Words, however, happened to be scarce.

"How did you survive in there?" Dr. Rogers asked for perhaps the hundredth time, although in a calm tone, to which Eleven holds her blank stare. She wrinkled her nose as she sniffed the air pointlessly, gazing up at the ceiling.

"For God's sake" Dr. Price abruptly moaned, "get on with it! Answer the damn questions!" he roared, shaking Eleven by her shoulders, to which she just looked back with emptiness.

"Calm down, Doctor!" Rogers strongly urged him, to which he, with a sigh, reluctantly followed. He sank back into his seat, rubbing the back of his head with an overwhelming frustration.

Dr. Rogers leaned a bit closer to Eleven, calmly speaking as he looked her in the eye.

"Now, Eleven. Can you please answer our questions?"

Eleven looks on before nodding nonchalantly, although neither doctor knew if it would prove to be the truth.

"Okay. Can you *please* tell us how you survived in there without food, water, or shelter for a month?" he questioned her with a level-head.

She unexpectedly smiled, looking upwards as if she were recalling something.

"Can't".

Dr. Price clenched his fists together as well as his jaw, beyond frustrated with the child.

"Why... *can't*... you?!" he asked her, becoming tiresome with it all.

Eleven stared straight ahead once more, the smile now quickly absent on her face as she glared seemingly straight into his soul.

"*Can't*" she repeated as if it were obvious, now seeming very serious and straightforward about it. From the way she spoke the word the second time, it almost jarred the doctors to the bone. She *meant* what she said. There's something holding her back...

"Do I have to go back in there to find out?" Dr. Price asked with a pinched expression, as if he expected her to give in.

Eleven shook her head, but didn't say a thing other than provide the simple gesture. She stared back at them with an equal intensity, not the least bit intimidated by Dr. Price and his somewhat aggressive demeanor.

"Experiment 011" Dr. Price spoke formally, suddenly shifting his

approach. "We really, really, *really* need to know how you survived. And also... we need you to do something for us".

Eleven's attention was further captured as she glanced at him curiously.

"Need?" she asked in a quiet voice, recalling the last time she was "needed for something". The last time she was told that she was "needed" in the lab, she was forced to perform the horrific; opening a portal to the darkest of dimensions, in which she had experienced things no human... or *any* being for that matter, should *ever* have to experience.

"Yes" he spoke coarsely. "We need you. You know that portal?"

Her eyes darted back and forth between the two doctors, the word "portal" resounding inside of her. She had heard the word many times before while in the laboratory, and it seemed to spawn a new level of terror in her bones after hearing it repeated by Dr. Price. In fact, she felt like running away right then and there; but she held herself back, knowing her power, and knowing that these two doctors were not Brenner; her papa. She wouldn't hesitate to use her abilities in self defense...

"No" she whispered, unable to control her mouth. She quickly covered it, but it was far too late. She had ignited a spark in the doctor's interest.

"You *do* know" Dr. Price cackled, wiping his long hair away from his eyes as he stared ahead at her somewhat menacingly. "Well then, I don't even have to do any explaining, do I?"

She held her glare defiantly, ignoring her fear as she looked him dead in the eye. She knew the power she possessed, and she wasn't afraid to use it. She wasn't afraid.

"You wanna' know somethin' funny?" he asked her in a taunting tone, reaching into his pocket in a threatening manner. "I know what you're doing. You're waiting for me to slip up so you can kill me. Right? Oh, come on! Don't be silly, Eleven. We're gonna' do this the friendly way, right? No low blows..."

Eleven scooted back in her chair, as he approached her, taking a piece of cloth from his pants' pocket.

"You see this?" he asked, holding up the piece of cloth. "This is your kryptonite, isn't it? You don't know it, but it is. Trust me, kid... I've done my research. Now, answer my question. How did you survive?"

Eleven didn't flinch, holding her composure confidently with a small breath, not showing even the smallest sign of fear.

The menacing Dr. Price nodded, pointing at her.

"Now, let me just tell ya' one thing. I respect the bravery. Awesome stuff. But guess what?" he taunted her, kneeling in front of her. "You may not even understand a word I'm sayin' other than *portal*. And guess what? It doesn't matter. The portal is all that matters, and I know you understand it. And guess what else? *You're going to close that portal*. Now, kryptonite... it's a really crazy thing... and you..." he laughed. "You're about to see that".

Before Eleven could react, he swiftly put his hands on her face, covering her eyes. She yelled in fear, grasping at his muscular arms, but cannot pry them loose. He motioned for Rogers to move around and assist in blindfolding her, which he did reluctantly, guilty for committing such an act. However, he did as he was told, tightening the blindfold against Eleven's eyes before Dr. Price handcuffed Eleven's hands behind her back, keeping her from removing the extremely tight blindfold from her face.

"So..." Dr. Price taunted. "Kryptonite. You can't see, you can't kill. That's your kryptonite. Lovely, right?"

Eleven simply shrieked in total horror, knowing that her powers cannot be used if she can't lay eyes on a target... she should've killed them while she should. Now she was stuck in the lab for an indefinite amount of time... blind, scared and defenseless.

"Now, tell me, or we'll have to move to the next step" Dr. Price threatened, covering her mouth to disable her screaming. She breathed harshly through her nose, obviously panicking at this point.

"You have five seconds" he commanded, uncovering her mouth as she gasps for breath. "Five... four... three... two..."

She looked downwards at the floor dishearteningly, beginning to cry.

"One... zero. Well, I'll be darned. I really tried to like you, kid, but you... you pushed my buttons. And until you talk..." he laughed evilly. "It's gonna be a hell of a time".

He backhanded the small child with shocking viciousness, knocking her out of the seat and on to the floor as Rogers looked on in horror, his ears suddenly not registering sound in the room. The scene seemed to move in slow motion as Rogers screamed, lunging for Price to keep him from severely injuring the child.

However, as he attempted to pry Price off, the stronger doctor pushed him away harshly, sending him slamming into the wall.

He pinned Eleven's head to the floor with a purely sadistic grin as she wept, then pulling her to her feet as she tried her best to reach her throbbing face, the pain rocking her body.

"Listen here, kid" Price grunted, holding her stiffly in front of him. "Until you open that portal, you're gonna' be stuck here. You won't escape. You won't get out. Your life will be hell until you do this".

"You can't do that, Price!" Rogers intervened, his hands on his head in horror. "You can't beat up a kid! You ca-"

"I can do what I want! I'm the lead scientist!" he argued back, pulling her along roughly. "Now come on, darling. Let's go find you a... *makeshift prison cell*... until you're ready to talk".

So, Eleven *finally* makes it back, and now she has to deal with the new lead doctor, Dr. Price? And wow, is he ever a piece of trash. The question is: will Eleven make it back to Mike in the others? Will she agree to close the portal?

That's all ahead, and much, much, much, much, much more.

Thanks for reading and please drop any thoughts or comments

in the reviews! I'm hoping to write this entire series, which in order to do, I need some response! Thank you for reading! See you later, alligator.

3. Free

Welcome back to more of the first episode of *Back To Reality!* Once again, each episode will be five chapters. I hope everyone is enjoying it so far! Now, back to it...

Hawkins Arcade- 90 Minutes Later...

Finally out of spare change and for Will; out of patience, the group decided to move on. They left the arcade fulfilled, yet still felt quite bored. Ever since November, the town (aside from the vigorous press coverage, paparazzi and national attention) had returned to its former, serene state. Serene was nice and all, but something to attract the attention of the townspeople was never a bad thing (excluding all morality).

"It's cold" Dustin stated, void of any particular emotion as they walked back to their parked bicycles.

"It's winter. Of course it's cold" Mike replied bluntly, glancing over at Dustin sharply.

"I mean colder than usual" he clarified. "I wonder if it's as cold as the Upside-Down" he added with a deep look, directing the statement at Will.

Will looked at him as if he were recalling past memories, exhaling as his breath became visible in the frosty winter air.

"It's not" he answered calmly. "I'll never be that cold again".

The clique continued to their bikes and set off, headed back to Mike's home; the common location used for hanging out together. Their *Dungeons and Dragons* games were self-proclaimed as being "legendary" by the small group, to which, to their frustration, many dismissed as childish, insignificant claims. Regardless, they had spent many memorable nights together at Mike's home.

Of course, the lingering memory of Eleven still loomed over them;

especially when Mike would glance in the mirror outside of his bedroom. It would never fail to trigger the most emotional memories of her, which etched misery into his core. Some nights he'd dream of seeing her again, and would awake with his face stained with happy tears, only to have them turn to quite bleak in nature.

After parking their bikes outside, Mike checked his watch for the time:

4:11 PM.

He sighed as he and his friends proceeded towards the garage, wondering what they would do for the rest of the day. Dungeons and Dragons had filled a majority of the past week outside of school, and planning a new game would take perhaps days, even weeks. With Eleven around, it made them feel oh-so-invincible. They felt like they could face any challenge on the face of the earth and come out unscathed. It was truly a feeling that encouraged excitement, and brought dire situations of peril upon them (not that they really minded).

"I don't really know what we're gonna do all day" Mike stated as they approached the garage, Dustin fidgeting with the baseball cap on the top of his head as they came to a stop.

"Just somethin' to fill the time" Lucas suggested. "It's all we've ever done since last month anyways".

"We could draw" Will said, to which the others, remembering Will's tendency to draw somewhat disturbing images, rejected avidly.

"No" the remainder of them spoke in near-unison, to which Will looked on blankly.

"Was just a suggestion" he spoke dishearteningly.

"Look" Dustin spoke to him kindly. "It's not that you're a bad drawer... it's just that the rest of us are. And... I mean... you *do* draw some creepy stuff".

"Yeah... but no offense" Lucas confirmed Dustin's statement. "I mean... even if they are creepy, you gotta be a pretty good artist to scare

someone with a piece of paper".

Although they expected Will to at least stifle a giggle, he looked on with an empty expression before aiming his eyes at the ground.

Mike bit his lip at Will's constant numb demeanor, looking at the others with a quizzical face. He hated to see Will so down all the time, but it was tough to do anything at this point. Will's mother insisted that time would clean and refresh his plagued mind, but some psychiatrists insisted that unless he received urgent psychological care, he'd be scarred for life.

"Let's just think of something else" Mike spoke to the others. "There's plenty to do... even if we do live in the slowest town on the planet".

"I wish another Eleven would come along" Dustin imagined. "Even the Demogorgon. It was like *The Hobbit* in *real* life".

Mike rolled his eyes.

"Well, it's probably not going to ever happen again, so... let's not wish too much. It's back to reality, I guess..."

"Psh" Dustin snorted. "Reality is boring".

"Well, at least there's not some faceless monstrosity after us... right?" Will asked him, causing them to consider his words.

"Is it better to be safe but live a boring-as-hell life, or is it better to live dangerously, but you know...?" Lucas pondered aloud, scratching the back of his head.

There were a few moments of silence before Mike spoke up again, changing the subject of the conversation drastically.

"Do you guys think El is in the Upside-Down?"

The others paused, looking him over as if he had thirty heads.

"I thought we agreed not to talk about it anymore" Will said slowly, knowing the topic was painful for Mike, as well as for himself.

Mike sighed harshly, rubbing his forearm in obvious mental anguish.

"I know" he said. "I know we did. But I just... I wish there were some way to know".

Dustin nodded, understanding his friend's genuine, raw concern. Although he wasn't quite as close to Eleven, he had certainly befriended her, and it hurt to have her gone. He couldn't imagine the constant uncertainty that Mike was facing...

"You got that compass?" Mike abruptly asked, turning to him. Dustin quickly nodded, reaching into his pocket and pulling out the compass; the one they had used to find the portal in the first place. The four of them stared at the face of the compass in anticipation, curious to see if the compass was still inaccurate.

"Well, shit!" Dustin exclaimed. "It's still a thing!"

"The portal is still there!" Mike said as he witnessed the compass still pointing the wrong direction.

The others observed Mike as he grew excited; not for the fact that the portal still existed, but for the fact that if El was out there, she had a way home. They had no idea how big the Upside-Down was, but surely she'd make it back eventually... however, it had been over a month. How could she survive in such conditions, and make it back alive?

Mike felt his excitement begin to fade as he thought more and more about it. He knew that thinking too much was certainly a problem for him, but he never seemed to be able to stymie his mind in time to save himself.

"What if she made it back?" Dustin asked as Mike continued thinking the situation through.

"How could she?" Mike muttered. "Unless she got back weeks ago, she had to starve to death or die of thirst... not to mention that the Demogorgon might be there too..."

"Well, if it is, I'm sure she crushed it again with her mind" Lucas hypothesized.

"No" Mike sighed. "She used so much power... she'd be too tired to fight it off again. There's no way that she could make it back".

"Don't say that" Lucas told him.

"What?" Mike asked irritably. "Are we just supposed to say "oh, she made it back! Everything will be okay! We'll live happily ever after!" No! We have to be *realistic*! She... she's not going to make it back..."

The group stood, shocked by Mike's sudden mood change. After having the best of times competing at the arcade, it was bewildering to see the emotion between the four of them flip like a coin. Although it was no longer rare to see, it still never failed to bemuse the four of them.

"Well, at least the portal's there" Will spoke up. "That means there's not a zero percent chance of her making it back. She's a superhero... well, as you guys say. She *could* find a way..."

Mike stared ahead as he began tearing up, but quickly wiped his eyes with his sleeve before anyone noticed.

"Whatever" he mumbled. "I just hope she makes it back before the Snow Ball".

Meanwhile At The Lab...

Eleven's powers were quite exquisite in nature. Although she could move things with sight, or even use her energy to move objects out of sight, as long as her eyes were covered, she could not perceive the world with her eyes. She couldn't *see* the mass of an object and focus on it. No matter how hard she tried, her brainwaves just couldn't seem to escape through her eyes...

She sat, chained and wrapped to a metal chair in a small, dark room the size of a closet. Although she couldn't see the room, she wondered to herself if it were the same room Dr. Brenner used to repeatedly enclose her in.

Her breathing had slowed down in pace after being brutally hit across the face by Dr. Price, but she could still feel the throbbing of

the tremendous bruise across her cheek. She knew her appearance would be quite antagonizing to glance at in a mirror once she escaped; that is, *if* she escaped.

Eleven was smart enough to know that escaping wasn't impossible. There's no way a mutant like her could be contained forever; and as far as she knew, there was no way she could possibly lose her powers. They were *part* of her now.

After a good while of sitting in silence, she heard the door to the closet of sorts open with the unsettling screeching sound of metal, and she felt her pulse increase a bit. She, above anything, *never* wanted to return to the Upside-Down, and to close the portal... she feared she'd have to go back. She feared the Upside-Down even above Dr. Price, as she knew what horrors the dimension held.

To her surprise, she felt the blindfold on her face being untied, her thoughts delving deep into the confusion. She knew the person untying her could not possibly be Dr. Price, as she had already figured out his true colors. There's simply no way he'd help her.

As the blindfold fell to the floor, she looked into the eyes of the other scientist she had been around a decent bit. She had forgotten his name.

Dr. Rick? Dr. Ron? Dr... Rogers! That's it!

She decided that she wasn't too afraid of Dr. Rogers, as she had no reason to be. He had committed no wrong towards her aside from his association with the laboratory.

"You" he whispered loudly. "You need to listen to me, okay?"

Although she was quite confused, she nodded with attentive eyes.

"I can get you out" he spoke, "'cause I don't like how Price is treatin' you. You don't deserve that... just follow me, okay?" he continued as he began unlocked the chains holding her to the chair.

"Price?" she questioned quietly.

"Yeah. He's the mean guy. Kill him if you want... I don't care".

At last, Eleven was free. She stood up and looked down at her dirty, ripped, battered clothes, and envisioned finally making it back to Mike and the others. It's all possible now...

"Now, come on!" Rogers insisted.

They made their way out of the closet and into a brightly lit hallway, and immediately made their way in the opposite direction of the small room. Eleven felt so alive again. It had been a while since she had been out of the Upside-Down and *not* into a constricting situation. If she made it out alive, she could start a new life for as long as she could; living with her friends, beginning an education...

It'd be perfect to her. For someone with her perilous background, simply living a life void of constant threats would be a practical utopia. Except, of course, the Upside-Down still existed. Not only that, but it was still connected to normal world, and the possibility of the Upside-Down becoming an issue again was all but guaranteed. She knew the horrors that the Upside-Down holds, and had experienced them for more than a month. It was a true nightmare; a caricature of nauseating memories.

The two of them came to a halt at a lone exit door at the end of a fairly isolated hallway, Dr. Rogers tugging on her shoulder to slow her down for a moment.

"Okay" he spoke breathlessly, pushing his hair back in an exhausted manner. "Once you get out, don't stop running. Hide somewhere. He'll be looking for ya' as soon as he notices you're gone, so make sure you get as far away as you can... I already cut a hole in the fence for ya', so that's not a problem anymore".

He patted her on the shoulder, opening the door as sunlight flooded into the hallway. Eleven took one last kind glance at him, silently thanking him for playing his part. Although Dr. Rogers knew her escape would ultimately result in much harm for himself, he could cover it up for as long as possible. He had done it before, and he'll do it again...

Eleven pointed to the bruise on her face with a concerned expression.

"No, no. Don't worry bout' that. Good luck" he finished, ushering her out of the door before pointing to the hole in the fence.

"Go there" he added, and with that, he swiftly shut the door, leaving her standing silently outside of the mysterious lab.

She was free.

Immediately, Eleven sprinted for the hole in the fence, the image of the ruthless Dr. Price serving as inspiration to move with haste. She leapt through the small opening, not taking one second to catch her breath. She was back in the real world, and immediately noted two things: the temperature (freezing cold) and the lack of leaves on the trees. It had been so long since she had experienced winter, so such a sight was quite exhilarating to take in.

She continued her escape as she weaved and hopped over logs and between trees, fighting away thorns and kicking sticks out of the way as she moved in the general direction of Mike's neighborhood. Nothing was going to stop her from making it home.

She was in the clear.

Meanwhile...

Jonathan didn't appreciate the constant attention looming over himself and his family. Being the introvert he was, being the center of it all made him feel shaky and unstable; especially when someone would ask questions with no reasonable answer. If he were to answer honestly, he'd be seen as loose in the head, so he feared. He'd rather not answer any questions at all, and revert back to living his life in peace and subtlety.

Sadly, a subtle life didn't seem to be in the works.

He began preparing dinner for his family, as his mother, Joyce, was scheduled to work overtime that night. As he set pulled a container of milk from the refrigerator, he recalled the nights he'd fix dinner for his mother while she sat by the phone, waiting for a call from her once missing son. She'd mutter aloud to herself about hearing her

son, which deeply disturbed Jonathan. They'd eventually eat dinner together after prying his mother from the telephone, which usually revolved around one predictable topic.

Jonathan knew his brother, Will, was having trouble living life normally again as well, and rightfully so. He had been trapped in an insufferable dimension for an extended period of time, and the time alone took its toll on his mind. As many doctors said, he'd "never be the same again". Although it was satisfying to have him back, it hurt to know that he would be permanently damaged inside.

As he was ready to pour the milk, the phone suddenly rang, causing him to spill a bit of milk on to the counter. He stared at the phone in frustration, moving towards it to see just who had caused him to make a mess.

"Hello?" he asked with a hint of exasperation into the phone.

"Jonathan?" an instantly recognizable voice asked into the phone.

"Nancy?" he asked into the microphone. "Something wrong?"

"No, no" she replied. "Steve told me he'd call. He's not there with you, is he?"

Ever since November, Jonathan and Steve had become something comparable to friends. Steve, understanding the way he had treated Jonathan in the past, felt quite the amount of pity for him. Thus, it wasn't uncommon to find Steve having a friendly chat with Jonathan over lunch.

"No, he's not here" Jonathan answered, still jealous about the relationship between Nancy and Steve. The envy had never faded over the course of the month; in fact, it had only fortified itself. He found himself romantically interested in Nancy, and dreamed of the day she would feel the same way. However, he found himself dwell on the conclusion that such a day would never come.

"Damn" Nancy replied. "I don't where he's gone..."

"Demogorgons don't multiply or something, do they?" he asked, hoping to sound somewhat offhand.

"Don't be stupid" Nancy said in a joking manner. "We can't jump to conclusions like that".

"But, I mean..." he began in a serious tone. "What if he got abducted by aliens?"

Nancy actually laughed for a moment before regaining her composure, lifting the phone back up to her ear.

"Aliens?"

"Don't laugh" Jonathan told her. "After last month, anything is really possible..."

"But aliens?"

"You never know" he responded with evident worry. "Shouldn't you be... I don't know... a little bit concerned?"

Nancy snorted.

"He's Steve. He'll find a way out of anything he gets himself into. How's your brother doing?"

Jonathan took a brief moment to appreciate the conversation, knowing it's not every day he got to converse with her over the phone. He ran his fingers through his lengthy hair before recollecting himself.

"Oh, he's... fine".

Nancy narrowed her eyes as she listened.

"Wasn't fine last time I was there. Has he miraculously recovered?" she asked with a bit of cynic.

Jonathan looked down at the floor sullenly, remembering the somber words of the doctors.

"No" he answered honestly. "I wanna believe he'll be okay, but..."

A chilling silence hung over them for a moment before Nancy

decided to break it.

"Maybe he will be" she spoke. "You never know anymore, do you?"

"Guess that's true" he replied in his usual calm voice. "Remember that night we found that weird tree?"

"Oh, yeah" Nancy said. "Not that I *want* to remember it... or what was on the other side of it..."

Jonathan nodded in empathy.

"I wouldn't want to either..." he trailed off, recalling the grisly details that Nancy relayed to him that bizarre night. The details of the Demogorgon, the coldness, the darkness, and the hopelessness of the Upside-Down- it efficiently shook him.

"Well... enough about that. I'll call you later tonight to catch up more, if you want" Nancy said. "Gotta go find Steve now".

Jonathan grinned.

"Oh, yeah. Sounds good... and good luck" he replied. "On finding Steve".

"Thanks" Nancy said. "Might need it. Bye!"

"Bye" Jonathan spoke before hearing the phone on the other end hang up. He hung the phone back on the holder and redirected his attention to the kitchen counter, grabbing a rag to wipe up the milk.

Although he hated cleaning up spills, it was worth it to talk to Nancy for even a few mere minutes.

Definitely worth it, he confirmed to himself.

The question was: how long would the biggest problem in his life be a milk spill?

4. The Roar

Meanwhile...

Mike, Lucas, Dustin and Will had grown tired of uneventfulness.

The four of them sat around an old mythology book in Mike's basement, discussing the various creatures that filled the pages. Some resembled dragons, slugs, snakes, gorillas and insects, while others appeared quite human-like in appearance. However, this was deceiving. Vampires appeared to be human outside of their piercing red-eyes and lengthy, threatening fangs, but this was far from the truth. One creature, "The Nightwalker" particularly interested them. However, the page containing the description of the monster had been inexplicably ripped, leaving only the first sentence as guidance:

The Nightwalker is perhaps the most insidious of all creatures, and-

That's all they had to run with. However, on the bright side, it *did* succeed in creating a conversation for much of the remainder of the afternoon.

"What do you think it *does*?" Mike asked the others.

"Maybe it eats worlds or something! Like Galactus!" Dustin wondered. "Imagine if somethin' like *that* actually existed!"

"Just *look* how evil it is" Lucas marveled as they observed the intricate drawing.

The body itself was tall and slender, its hands boasting several lengthy, jet-black claws. In fact, its entire body seemed to be jet-black; much like a shadow; only alive. Its eyes glowed a deep shade of blue, accentuating the overall haunting look of the figure. Its arms appeared long, although sturdy and strong. The group also noted the two small horns on the top of its head.

"Maybe it involved from a rhino" Dustin suggested.

"It's not *involved*", it's *evolved*", dumbass" Lucas reminded him, nudging him on the shoulder teasingly.

"Whatever. It's possible, though!"

Mike glanced from the spooky drawing over at Dustin.

"Who says monsters even evolve from animals?" he questioned. "I mean... what did the Demogorgon evolve from?"

"Nothin'" Dustin stated. "It's just a joke... um... theory. Yeah, just a theory".

"They probly' just spawn straight from hell" Will abruptly barged in, joining the conversation after spending his time prior drawing in the corner of the room.

"Hell?" Lucas asked him. "Or the Upside-Down?"

Will stared ahead, not even blinking as silence filled the room. All eyes were on Will as he thought deeply about the question.

"I mean, there's more than two dimensions, right?" Mike asked, breaking the uncomfortable silence.

The others shrugged aside from Will, who continued staring straight ahead.

"Could be" Dustin said. "Who says there's only two? Who makes all the rules?"

"God?" Lucas guessed. "I mean, who else would? And why would he make the Upside-Down? I thought it was just heaven n' hell..."

They took few seconds to take Lucas's words in, truly delving deep into the question. None of them could seem to stumble upon a suitable answer.

Mike closed the book in front of them, recognizing that the image before them was troubling Will, who continued staring numbly at the now closed book.

"Will, somethin' wrong?" Mike asked him, Will's strange behavior raising more than a few eyebrows.

"Yeah" Will responded, blinking quickly as if he had just broken a trance. "I mean, no" he corrected himself, rubbing his face.

The others exchanged a universal look of knowledge; that not all was well with Will. It was a rare sight to see *anything* right with him anymore, but regardless, it was their burden as friends to attempt to aid him.

"Will" Dustin told him, "that's obviously a lie".

Will looked around with unsteady eyes, looking as if he were ready to cry. However, a split second later, the look was wiped off of his face, his face void of any expression or emotion at all.

"Lie?" he said softly. "*What's* a lie?"

"That you're..." Mike started, taking a moment to study Will before completing his sentence. "Okay..."

"Why am I not okay?" Will asked them with a persuasive smile, now seeming to act even *more* strange. The others just couldn't seem to pinpoint exactly what was wrong with him, but it grew more and more concerning with each time Will spoke...

"You just aren't" Mike told him in frustration. "We all can see that! Why don't you tell us?!"

Will recoiled at the sound of Mike's frustrated voice, blinking several time to ensure that his eyes (or ears) did not deceive him.

"I... I don't know what to... um... tell you".

The others groaned, obviously irritated.

"Tell us why you're acting so weird" Lucas bugged him, desperate to know the cause of his unusual shift in behaviors.

"*How* am I acting weird?" he asked the others, not understanding their concerns. "I'm just acting like I always do!"

"No, you keep staring off in the distance... *and* staring at the picture of that Nightwalker!" Mike told him, gesturing to the now closed

book.

Will shrugged.

"What's new? I stare sometimes!"

The others sighed, the conflicts inside Will painfully obvious to them as he spoke.

"Something's wrong" Dustin stated bluntly.

"Of course something's wrong! I was trapped in that place for a month! Didn't you hear the doctors! I'm always going to be messed up! I'm *always* going to be a freak! Why the *hell* are you surprised overt the fact that I'm staring at a book?!"

Silence returned to the room as the others scooted a few inches back, stunned by Will's sudden outburst. He had never addressed his mental state directly, so hearing such things from his mouth was somewhat unnerving. Mike was the first to speak again over Will's rapid breathing, withholding caution as he responded to his friend's angry words.

"I'm sorry" Mike told him. "I didn't mean it like that. I was just... we're all here to help you..."

Will's eyes still appeared frustrated as he looked back at Mike, starting to tear up.

"I know" he said shakily, "I know. But don't be... don't be concerned for me. I'll never be okay... so don't act like I'm a burden. There's nothing you can do to change that, and I don't want to feel like just because I'm a little screwed in the head, it's hurting you too".

Immediately upon finishing his sentence, the group heard the front door forcibly open, causing the four of them to jump. No one was supposed to be home until later, and Nancy was upstairs in her room.

"...Mike?" Lucas spoke in nervous voice.

"Shh!" Mike whispered, pointing towards the basement closet. "Hide!"

The group rushed to the closet and opened the door, stuffing themselves inside; except for Mike, who lacked the room.

"You guys stay there! I'll hide somewhere else!"

The others looked at him worriedly.

"What about Nancy?" Dustin asked him.

"She'll be fine" Mike assured him, closing the door to hide them.

It's the Demogorgon Mike told himself as he crawled underneath the staircase, finding a suitable hiding place. *It's back!*

He held his breath as he heard creaking on the floor above them; implying slow, cautious footsteps. At that point, it sounded more like a burglar than a Demogorgon, due to its efforts to try and stay quiet and low-profile.

The door to the downstairs opened sharply as Mike heard it hit the wall and rattle. The door was obviously opened with a considerable amount of force, which added to the amount of fright. *Now*, it seemed, the intruder did not care about stealth. It began slowly walking down the stairs as Mike shook in fright, covering his mouth to keep from breathing too loudly. With each step the unknown being took, Mike cringed to himself, dread beginning to overwhelm him.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps stopped near the last stair, and Mike heard a sigh. Not just a sigh, but a very gentle, soft sigh. He instantly relaxed, knowing the sigh if that of another child. Perhaps another kid had wandered into their home on accident.

Yeah, that's gotta be it!

He crawled out from under the stairs, wiping the dust off of his red Indiana Hoosiers jersey, adjusting his eyes to meet those of the intruder.

Mike froze in place, trying to speak, but unable to find any sufficient words to match the startling, although brilliant situation before him.

"Mike?" Eleven said with a smile.

Meanwhile...

"Price!" Dr. Roger's screeched, slamming and locking the door behind him as he entered the lead scientists office. "We have a problem!"

Price glanced up from his computer irritably, removing his study glasses to empathize his impatience.

"What the hell do you mean?!" he practically yelled, rising from his seat.

"The portal! Something's... something's coming through!"

Price's eyes widened.

"Shit" he cursed under his breath. "Something?! What do you mean by that?!"

"One of those things! It's like the other one, except... except it's different! We need to hide! We need to-"

"No!" Price screamed, grabbing Rogers by the shoulders and staring him down menacingly. "We have to *fight*!"

The other doctor shook his head.

"We can't! Bullets don't hurt it! I locked the door... we need to turn off the lights. We need to hide!"

"It'll escape!" Price boomed furiously. "We can't let-"

"Price!" Rogers began sternly. "We *can't*! We have to hide, or-"

They heard a distant throaty roar along with several screams; screams of terror, and screams of death. Easily detectable was the overwhelming fear among the victims, which caused Price to look back to Rogers.

"Fine!" he spoke. "Turn off the lights! I have a safe in the back of my office- a huge one- that we can hide in".

Rogers instantly followed orders, turning off the lights to make the

room appear empty before moving to the back of the room with Dr. Price. The lead scientist swiftly entered a code to unlock the door before continuing inside the large space; larger than most walk-in closets. Price closed and locked the door behind them with urgency. It was evident that even through his stoic demeanor, Price was still beyond scared.

"That noise" Rogers spoke quietly. "That's awful".

"So" Price spoke with a hesitant grin, backing away from the door and standing beside Rogers. "That thing... it wasn't the only life in this other dimension..."

"Clearly" Rogers said. "God knows what else is hidin' in there".

As the two of them listened to the atrocious screams of horror echoing through the interior of the lab, Price turned to Rogers once more.

"I'll tell ya' one thing" he jeered. "It doesn't sound too pleasant".

Price and Rogers tried their best to relate to one another and establish a strong partnership, even though they butted heads over many issues. Even in dire situations, the two of them made sure that personal matters were kept at a standstill. It just wasn't "worth their time", the way they saw it. They were very business-like in their social approach.

"What do we do if, you know...?" Rogers asked anxiously.

"If it kills them all?" Price wondered, knowing the two of them were safe and sound locked in the vault.

"Yeah".

Price shrugged casually, leaning against the wall as he brushed his long, shaggy hair out of his face.

"We still have money" he stated. "There's plenty out there lookin' for a good paying job. We'll be fine".

"You're sure about that?" Rogers insisted with wide eyes, fumbling

with his hands as he stood nervously in front of Price, still in disbelief of the situation.

"Well, bottom line is: we're not alone in the multiverse. You know how much cash we could make offa' that?! A shit ton! That's how much!"

Rogers ushered him to quiet down out of fear that they could be found by the villainous creature.

"I mean" Rogers began. "People will know that after this *thing* gets loose, so... how would we make cash?"

Price smirked rubbing his hands together.

"Because" he began, "we have the one thing that can stop it".

Meanwhile...

"Mike?" Eleven spoke in shock.

Mike fought to find a suitable answer for several seconds, his jaw hung open a bit in shock. He blinked twice to ensure that this was not simply a dream, adding a pinch for extra insurance. The others came rushing out of the closet, crowding around Eleven in astonishment as Mike searched for an adequate thing to say.

"El!" Dustin exclaimed. "How are you here?!"

"This is crazy!" Lucas spoke in shock. "You made it back! Did you go to the Upside-Down?!"

However, Mike continued staring at her in utter bewilderment, looking as if his soul had left his body and gone on an expedition. He continued staring at Eleven until his consciousness reignited with his body, and he spoke at last.

"El!" he spoke excitedly. "How! How are you here?! You made it back!"

She looked back at him with a half-smile, her hair a good bit longer than when she had left. Mike stepped towards her slowly, debating

how to act. Her clothes appeared torn and ruffled; as if she had been homeless on the streets for the past month and a half. At last, his emotions overwhelmed him, and he pulled her into an emotional hug, tears beginning to deteriorate his vision into a foggy mess.

After a few seconds, Mike realized that their hug had greatly surpassed the length of a normal hug, and he released her, marveled by her sudden reappearance.

"How?" he asked again, the room now calmed down a bit. "How did you get back?"

She bit her lip, trying to find the words.

"Bad place" she answered.

"Bad place? The lab? You mean you went back through the *other* side of the portal?" Mike asked, elated to have her back.

She nodded in confirmation, also looking happy to be back home, away from the madness of the Upside-Down and the cruelty of the laboratory.

"What happened to your face?" Dustin asked, noticing the sizable bruise across her face.

"Bad people" she frowned, recalling the actions of the unforgiving Dr. Price.

The others understood the implications, assuming that the lab, already infamous for inhumane experiments may have acted abusively towards her.

"I'm sorry" Mike told her kindly. "I'm sorry that happened... but can I ask where you've been for the past month? I mean, the Upside-Down, duh... but how did you survive there?"

She looked at him uncomfortably and then down at the floor, letting loose a breath of exasperation. The glamor of the situation seemed to wear away as the question sucked the energy from the room, as well as from Eleven.

"El?" Mike asked. "Something wrong?"

She looked at them, shaking her head slowly. Her dark brown eyes appeared to be full of sudden, unexplained worry.

"No" she spoke bluntly. "Can't".

Noticing her discomfort regarding the topic, Mike decided to move on to a different topic.

"Well" he began, "you hungry? There's some waffles upstairs in the fridge".

The look of worry disappeared off her face as she grinned once again, looking back up the stairs she passed down just minutes ago.

"Hungry" she repeated Mike's words.

"Yeah. Are you?"

She nodded again, looking upwards.

"Yes".

They quickly made their way upstairs and fixed a dozen waffles to share between the five of them, relieved to see their group back together again. However, many questions still remained: would Eleven live with them from now on? Where would she go? Won't the lab be after her again?

As they ate, Mike looked up at Eleven again, who appeared anxious, and he easily detected the fear radiating from her body.

"El?" he spoke to her in a soft tone. "It's okay. The Demogorgon's gone. We don't have to be scared anymore".

She took another bite before shaking her head slowly, pointing to a new painting on the wall of the room that displayed an army of men preparing to fight in war; the numbers seeming limitless.

"Huh?" Lucas asked in confusion as she resumed eating her waffles. "What are you talkin' about?"

Eleven glanced back down at her stack of waffles and refused to answer.

Well, well, well... she's back! Although she brings some amount of uncertainty with her, she's back!

Anyways... something else escaped from the lab, eh? Should be interesting (or deadly).

Please drop any comments, thoughts or whatever in the reviews, and thanks for reading!

Until the final chapter...

5. Only The Beginning

And here we are! The last chapter of episode one! Crazy, isn't it? Anyways, there will be a good amount of episodes, so get ready! The story shall march onwards...

One Hour Later...

A bit of time had passed since Eleven found her way back to her friends, and not much had been uncovered since. The group's curiosity still remained remarkably strong, but Eleven seemed keen on returning to her former life; refusing to address certain questions about the Upside-Down. It was almost as if the mere thought frightened her...

The five kids sat around the dining room table, continuing to pry at Eleven's confidential recollections of the mysterious dimension and how she miraculously survived there. She hadn't spoken much aside from an occasional one word answer, seeming to be in shock. Perhaps returning to the luxuries of Hawkins from the Upside-Down was too much of a step for her.

"Come on, El" Mike spoke with a kind undertone; too fond of her to speak aggressively at this point. "Lucas, Dustin and Will have to go eat dinner soon, so they have to go home. You can talk to us... we're your friends, remember?"

Eleven, sick of sitting around and practically being interrogated, stood up from the table, beginning to wander around Mike's house like she used to back in November.

"She's still crazy, huh?" Dustin asked quietly, receiving an annoyed look from Mike.

"Shh!" Mike spoke his way sternly. "She's been back an hour, and you're already insulting her?"

Dustin shrugged, taking a step back as if he thought Mike were overreacting.

"Jeez, it's just a joke" he muttered. "*Of course* she's crazy. She wouldn't be El if she wasn't a lil' weird".

Mike rolled his eyes, turning back to Eleven as she looked around at his den; the den she had paced and explored just over a month ago. However, her eyes seemed to be filled with the same, never-fading intrigue that infested her even back then.

"Same" she said simply, which Mike's ears detected.

"Same?" he asked, stepping up beside her as she stared at the photo of Nancy on the shelf.

"Same" she repeated, looking at his face now.

"Yeah" Mike responded. "It's still the same. We didn't move anything" he added, referring to the objects on the shelf.

Eleven ventured on, running her hand down the slightly dusty shelf before moving over to the recliner, eyeing it with wonder. Mike noticed her intrigue regarding the significantly sentimental object, watching her eyes as they scanned the chair.

"Remember that?" he asked her, gesturing to the chair.

Eleven looked up from the chair and into his eyes, and then back to the chair. She nodded, but didn't speak a word. It was not a rare thing to witness; Eleven's non-verbal communications. In fact, it somewhat defined her as a peculiar person. But to Mike, that made her all the more interesting.

Will then approached them, stopping in front of the two of them as they continued sharing a common memory over the recliner.

"Eleven" Will spoke for the first time in a long, long while. "Were you there too? With me? In the Upside-Down?"

Eleven looked at him solemnly, offering no answer.

"She helped get you back" Lucas reminded him. "Remember? She's the only reason we *actually* did it..."

"I heard her voice" Will admitted, as this day was the first time he had heard her voice besides in the dark dimension. "I know I did".

Eleven retained her blank expression as she looked at Will curiously. The group listened closely as they figured she was about to speak; however, not even a whisper escaped her lips as she turned back towards the chair, seeming to forget about Will's presence.

Will sighed quietly, knowing it would be tough to receive a definitive answer from the mysterious girl. However, answers were all that he longed for. Answers, and a way to forget about his experiences in hell. He wished to return to being himself, but he felt trapped; ensnared by his overwhelming memories of the harrowing wastelands of the Upside-Down. He felt that he had no way to escape it, although having someone around who understood his torment would help quite a bit.

He remembered his mom telling him about her guilt; a guilt she felt due to having to leave her son to work each day. However, he persuaded her that he'd be fine and that making money was a necessity for the family (which after all, it was). Will didn't want to feel like he was a burden to those that he loved, but he also wanted help and guidance. He wanted an antidote.

"Don't take it personally" Lucas whispered to Will as Eleven and Mike sauntered in a different direction. "She doesn't say much".

"Yeah" Will responded. "Why doesn't she?"

Lucas shrugged, looking back to Mike and Eleven with blissful eyes.

"No idea. She talks to him the most though" he informs Will, glancing directly at Mike.

Will looked carefully at the figure of the girl; her hair a bit longer than shave, her eyes full of innocence, yet boasting a disturbing undertone that hinted towards fear and darkness. She truly was an intriguing child.

"To Mike?" Will asked to be certain.

"Yeah" Lucas responded in a whisper. "And I have a theory that they

may be a hell' lot more than friends at this point".

Will squinted his eyes.

"You think so?"

Lucas nodded confidently.

"Oh, definitely" he stated. "I'm an expert at these things".

"Expert at what things?" Dustin barged in, now suddenly standing at Lucas's side with a look of wonder.

Lucas turned to him.

"Ya' know..." he said, gesturing to Mike and Eleven. "The two of them. It's been obvious *forever* now".

"It has?" Dustin asked.

"Of course" Lucas snorted. "We've talked about this like a gazillion times".

"Oh, yeah" Dustin recalled, scratching the back of his neck. "I gotcha".

Eventually Mike and Eleven wandered back over to the others as they whispered, curious to see what all the commotion is about.

"Something... wrong?" Mike asked slowly, narrowing his eyes as he stopped in front of them.

"Oh" Lucas spoke with a chuckle. "Nothing... we're just talking about that time Troy tripped and spilled his lunch in the cafeteria. Those were the *days*".

Dustin snickered at Lucas's impeccable ability of telling believable lies, fighting to hide his concealed amusement.

"Oh" Mike spoke calmly. "Okay..."

An awkward silence filled the air for a few moments as Mike stared at them, still trying to decipher if they were telling the truth.

However, the voice that broke the silence was one that no one expected to hear.

"Others" Eleven said calmly, her hands beginning to shake. The group immediately turned to her with expressions drenched with surprise, their breathing seeming to cease in anticipation. Eleven looked at them with a terrified look as Mike noticed her trembling.

"El?" he asked. "What's wrong?"

"Others" she repeated in a panicked tone before whirling around and dashing towards the stairs, provoking the others to pursue her in worry.

She opened the basement door and began running down the steps, eliciting further chaos and panic among the children.

"El! Wait Up! What's wrong!?" they called after her, chasing her down the stairs in a flurry of uncertainty.

Why was she running? What does she mean by: "The Others?" Why was she shaking?

They came to a screeching halt at the basement table, now breathing quite heavily from the sprinting. Mike looked at Eleven as she slammed the *Dungeons and Dragons* board on to the table, squinting in dubiety.

"El" he spoke again. "What are you doing?"

She poured the various monster figures out of the box and on to the table, on top of the board, and began standing them up in a random formation, her eyes full of determination. Mike, Lucas, Disting and Will observed her questionable actions; her state of mind rapidly changing.

After she had arranged the monsters in a bizarre formation, she pointed to them.

"Others".

The monsters were arranged in a triangle of sorts, the Demogorgon

being the front of the triangle. Behind him were rows of more atrocities, eventually ending with the despicable Tarrasque; the strongest monster in the entire game.

"There's... others... in the Upside-Down?" Mike asked.

Eleven felt tears running down her face as she stared at the figures, taking in the beastly figure of the Tarrasque.

"Is the Tarrasque coming after us?" Lucas questioned, noticing Eleven's gaze.

She shook her head.

"No" she answered. "More. Worse".

The three words were more than she had spoken all day, but were more than enough to shake the entirety of the group.

"El!" Mike spoke, frightened. "What's coming? What's coming next? We *need* to know".

Eleven pointed to the Slaad; an amphibious creature with long teeth, claws and bulging muscles.

"What?!" Dustin asked. "The Slaad is coming?!"

Mike knew that Eleven's army illustration was *just* merely an illustration. He also knew the Slaad was an illustration just like the Demogorgon was for the monster back in November. The Slaad wasn't coming; simply another monster, perhaps even stronger than the "Demogorgon".

"No" Eleven muttered, wiping her tears. "Worse".

The group exchanged a horrified glance, pulses in the room beginning to increase in pace. Usually when Eleven spoke of something drastic happening, it *ended up happening*. If something worse than the Demogorgon was on the way, that spelled disaster for the town of Hawkins. Not only would people die, but the national controversy spotlight would continue to linger over the town and its citizens, and even bolder in magnitude.

"What do we do?" Dustin asked in his usual panicked, toothy voice, his eyes darting from left to right.

Eleven picked up the figure of the most powerful monster; the Tarrasque, and looked into its fiery scarlet eyes.

"Eleven, is there anything we *can* do?" Mike pleaded to her.

The mysterious young girl simply remained silent, blinking back further tears. She knew the creatures of the Upside-Down and the pain that came with them, and she also knew that the invasion of Hawkins was inevitable.

And she didn't know how to stop it.

Meanwhile- Some Time Later

"Well shit" Dr. Price muttered cynically, staring at the mess of corpses in the hallway of the laboratory, his hands propped up on his hips.

The monster had escaped the premises, so it appeared, and not many doctors had survived the breakout. Dr. Price and Dr. Rogers had found refuge in the form of a safe in the back of Price's office, effectively evading any physical harm.

However, for Rogers, the screams of the dying and the roar of the unknown creature had struck him mentally. He felt dizzy, shaky and unstable inside; the horrific shrieks of the endangered doctors echoing in his head.

Just as he thought he could eventually forget it, however, the two of them stumbled across the jumble of corpses in the hallway, the lights on the ceiling flickering as if they could give out at any moment. The sickening irony scent of blood stained the air, causing Rogers to bend over in nausea.

Dr. Price looked at his companion disapprovingly, eyeing the dead bodies as if it were just another day in the office.

"Oh, c'mon, sport" he joked, staring at the mangled bodies as if it were just another day in the office. "It's just a few deadies. Haven't

you ever seen any?"

Rogers reluctantly shook his head, turning away from the carnage.

Price ran his fingers through the coarse stubble on his chin, looking back to Rogers.

"You like my lil' stubble?" he asked him casually. "I've been tryna' grow it out for a few weeks".

"Price" Rogers spoke in a shaky voice. "We have bigger problems than your damn beard... we have people... dead..."

"Yeah?" Price asked. "I'd say my beard is pretty important, but if you insist..."

The two of them proceeded to the portal room with precaution. Price seemed awfully calm and comfortable as they stepped over scattered bodies, which Rogers found disturbing. It only confirmed his suspicions that work, for Price, was valued over friends and family; as well as *any* form of life.

"Well, hell" Price spoke with a smirk as he glared at the portal.

However, the portal no longer looked as it looked before. The passage was ripped open, and required no effort in order to cross dimension. All a being had to do was walk through the opening; any constraint no longer existent. Price and Rogers could stare through the opening and into the mysterious dimension in front of them.

"Where do you think it went?" Rogers asked carefully, staring fearfully into the portal.

"No clue" Price replied. "I haven't studied inter-dimensional creature psychology as of now... although I reckon it'd be pretty helpful at this point".

"What do we do?" Rogers questioned, genuinely concerned for the well-being of Hawkins. "We opened the portal. Shouldn't we take res-"

Price grabbed Rogers by the throat tightly, eyeing him down as a method of intimidation.

"Don't you dare tell anyone a thing, you son of a bitch!" he screamed intensely. "If anyone's gonna lose their career over somethin' that's not even their fault... well, it sure as hell isn't gonna be me".

"Okay!" Rogers croaked through his constricted throat before Price released him, shoving him backwards.

"Anyone asks... we didn't do a thing. We don't know about a thing. We had *nothing* to do with this. Got it?"

Rogers nodded quickly, looking downwards at the floor, feeling quite inferior to the barbaric Dr. Price.

"Yes" he gulped. "Yeah".

He knew it wouldn't be long before Dr. Price did something despicable that he just *couldn't* go along with, and he knew that when he did, it would be a whirlwind of a storm for him. He didn't know how he'd stand up to him, but somehow, some way, he'd let himself loose from the reigns of the inhumane. He couldn't continue condoning such grotesque tactics of experimentation, and such mindless ways of thinking.

"Now, what're we supposed to do with you guys?" Price asked the bodies with a somewhat sadistic smile.

"Call the paramedics?" Dr. Rogers suggested as he laid eyes on a former coworker. Already dead, she was ripped in half at the waist, her hands still twitching as blood poured on from her chest.

"Or we could burn them".

"Price" Rogers grunted. "They have families and friends. We can't just act like they're gone. They deserve a funeral... the families... they deserve to have closure".

"To hell with closure" Price spoke maniacally. "Where's my closure for *this*? There's some alien monster on the loose in the town... there's gonna be a lot more people missing pretty soon. These "disappearances"... they'll blend right in. Any people they can't find they'll assume were devoured by ole' Gutripper".

"Gutripper?" Rogers asked in confusion.

"That's my new name for whatever did this" Price elaborated.

Price suddenly remembered Eleven, stuck in the closet of sorts back down the hallway.

"And remember" Price said, turning back away from the portal. "We've got the one way of fighting little supernatural devils like this one".

As they began walking towards Eleven's cell, Rogers re-envisioned the scene of setting Eleven free in his mind much like a movie, growing more and more fearful as they pattered down the hallways of the lab. He knew that Price would be absolutely furious upon finding the cell empty, but the escape of the monstrosity would help to cover it up.

They reached the closet door, and Price came to a stop in front of it, reaching out for the door handle. He flung open the door and grinned wildly at the empty interior, turning to Rogers as he rubbed his hands together.

"Well" he chuckled. "Lookey here. We have a closet, but no experiment".

Rogers looked on in a mix of concern and confusion, his eyebrows raised at Price's lack of anger.

"You... don't seem mad".

Price pressed his lips together, registering Rogers' words.

"Do I not?" he asked. "Strange. Maybe..." he began moving towards Rogers as he back away from the lead scientist. "Maybe I would be more surprised if I hadn't watched the security tapes last night".

Rogers felt his stomach sink, his insides replaced with ice all of a sudden. His knees became slightly shaky as he continued backing up.

Price quickly pulled out a handgun, pointing it directly at Rogers' face with a smirk.

"What?!" he asked, suddenly seeming irate. "You thought you could set the girl free, and I'd never find out?! She could just... skip off into the sunset, flinging a middle finger back at me as she escapes? Is *that* how you thought it was gonna work?"

Rogers held his breath, struggling to speak.

"Listen here, sunshine" Price began, placing his pointer finger on the trigger of the gun. "You slipped up. You did wrong. Tell me, please: who would I be not to punish you? I had the experiment right where I wanted her... we would have been rich. We could have gotten rid of whatever came through that portal. We *could* have. But you" he said, looking into Rogers' eyes, "you slipped up. You betrayed me... and for that... I have to work for the greater good".

He pulled the trigger, only to receive a clicking sound that echoed throughout the hallways. Rogers reopened his squinted eyes, realizing that the gun was jammed.

Rogers turned and sprinted towards the exit door, Price yelling in fury as he escaped. Rogers whirled back as he ran to ensure that Price wasn't chasing him; which he, for some reason, chose not to.

As Rogers slammed out the exit door and into the sunlight of the outside, Price watched him from back down the hallway, dropping his jammed handgun onto the ground with a frown. He watched the exit door slowly close, leaving him standing in silence as he breathed heavily through his nostrils.

"That man can *fly*" he spoke with a twisted grin, beginning to walk towards the exit door, slowly, but surely following his footsteps.

6:04 PM

"You're *one hundred* percent sure your mom is back?" Mike asked out of concern to Will as he prepared to leave on his bicycle.

"Yeah" Will answered, "and Jonathan probably has something cooked up. And even if the Demogorgon came back... or something else... what're the odds it'd get me again?"

Mike shrugged.

"I'd rather *any* of us not get taken again" Mike replied. "So, I mean... I guess I can be kind of paranoid. Just... be careful".

Will nodded before pedaling away, leaving the rest of his friends standing on Mike's driveway. It had been quite the interesting, yet harrowing day. The sun had set and the night had begun its reign over the earth, the stars glowing brightly in the sky with no clouds overhead. Mike continued to wish for snow, although it wasn't scheduled to happen any day that week.

"He'll be fine" Dustin insured him from over his shoulder, which Mike tried to accept. However, after receiving knowledge from Eleven that the Upside-Down was a land ruled by many creatures, he found it difficult to.

He thought back to the compass, knowing that the portal was still open. The threat was still there, and the possibility of one of them being stolen back into the mysterious land had not faded in the least bit.

"Where's Nancy?" Dustin asked out of the blue. "I haven't seen her all day".

"I don't know" Mike replied. "All I know is that my parents have to go get Holly at daycare and that they'd be back at like six thirty".

Mike turned around to his silent friends, his breath visible in the air as he looked back at his garage.

"It's cold" he simply stated. "Let's go back inside".

Dustin and Lucas didn't have to leave as soon as Will, so they opted to stick around with Mike and Eleven, intrigued to see their friend back, although not surprised. They had a feeling all along that she'd return; even earlier that day at the arcade they had discussed the likelihood of such an event occurring.

As the four friends sat on the sofa in Mike's den, Lucas spoke up.

"Mike?" he asked. "How are you going to... y'know... explain all this..."

to your parents?"

Mike shrugged, noticing Eleven's stare beaming his way.

"They know who El is, but... they'll be shocked to see her back... and if they don't let her stay..." he drifted off. "No" he spoke sternly, "they can't make her leave..."

"Technically they can" Dustin told him. "It's their house. I brought a little dog home one time, and they wouldn't even let *him* stay".

Mike stared back at Eleven breathlessly for a moment before falling back down to reality, remembering his conversation with Lucas and Dustin.

"Oh, w-well..." he stuttered. "Your parents and my parents are different..."

"Yours are probly' stricter, honestly. My dad would let me eat ice cream all day... it's just my mom, she-"

"Dustin" Lucas said. "It's probably better *not* to eat ice cream all day. Isn't your dad a diabetic?"

Dustin shrugged briskly.

"Yeah... I guess my sweet tooth is hereditary".

"Sweet tooth?" Lucas questioned with an incredulous look. "You actually think you like ice cream because you have some weird tooth?"

Dustin groaned.

"It's an expression" he muttered.

Mike couldn't help but pay attention to Eleven's bizarre stare. Her eyes felt like needles piercing into his skin, and he simply could not ignore it. He wanted to ask her why she was staring directly at him for such a long amount of time.

Maybe it's about our little kiss back at the school he pondered to

himself, but then decided that she was probably just daydreaming. *Yeah. She's probably just thinking and she doesn't know she's staring at me.*

However, just as he thought this, Eleven smiled his direction, causing him to wonder if she were daydreaming or not. The smile certainly seemed genuine... maybe he was just overthinking it...

"Mike" Dustin said. "Did you hear that?"

Mike turned to him with wide eyes.

"Hear what?" he asked quickly, scanning the room for any threats.

"I don't know" Dustin said, looking at Mike, Eleven and Lucas. "It came from outside. Sounded... like a weird *roar*".

Mike sniffed, looking back over at the still-smiling Eleven.

"Probably just a car horn".

Oh, yeah... definitely. It's just a car horn. It's always *just a car horn*.

Anyways, that's the end of episode one of my *Stranger Things: The Others* series! I hope everyone is enjoying it so far. There's plenty of original characters, monsters, ships, evil scientists... wait, no spoiling. Anyways, please write out any thoughts or concerns in the reviews. I really appreciate it!

Thanks for reading!

Next Time (Episode Two): Mike and the others come face-to-face with another mutant child from the laboratory as Nancy continues her search for the missing Steve. Meanwhile, the sinister Dr. Price begins his search for Eleven, as well as Rogers.